

The agency cannot comment on issues upon which litigation is currently pending. That being said, we can provide you with the following information, attributed to our Communications Director Meghan Collins:

The Florida Department of Education is committed to ensuring that Florida's students have access to high quality educators at every step along their education journey. We hold our students to high standards so they are prepared to excel in college, career and life, and the teacher certification exams are essential to ensuring their teachers have the skills and knowledge necessary to help them succeed.

I would also like to share with you some of the funding proposals for the 2017-18 Budget, which were created with that goal in mind.

To help ensure Florida students have well-prepared, high-quality educators and that educators are recognized and compensated for outstanding performance, the "Fighting for Florida's Future" Budget includes:

- \$15 million to pay for initial teacher certification and renewal certification fees. This investment will save each of Florida's aspiring teachers as much as \$555 on their initial certification. This investment will also save each of Florida's current teachers \$75 for their certification renewal;
- \$43 million for the following teacher recruitment and retention initiatives:
 - \$10 million for a one-time hiring bonus for Florida's teachers testing in the top 10 percent of the Florida Teacher Certification Exam in their subject area;
 - \$5 million to increase the diversity of the teachers in critical shortage and high need areas, particularly STEM;
 - \$5.9 million to recruit Bright Futures Scholars that major in Education and commit to four years of teaching following graduation in the rural district from which they graduated;
 - \$16 million for districts to implement targeted recruitment and retention initiatives that meet their needs; and
 - \$6.1 million to reward great teachers who go to or stay in low performing schools.
- \$8.5 million in funding for initiatives focused on professional development, including:
 - \$7 million to support principal training;
 - \$849,450 for approximately 600 math teachers to participate in a four-day training session during the summer;
 - \$500,000 to provide a year-long, job-embedded, researched-based program to principals, principal supervisors, and education leaders to improve student instruction; and
 - \$100,000 for the Teacher LEAD Network program which provides district Teacher of the Year winners the opportunity to participate in professional development designed to improve leadership skills needed to support improved teaching.